

REAL LOVE WORKS

ISSUE APRIL-JUNE 2011

HONEY, I CAN DO IT!

Swapping domestic
chores – why you
and Hubby should

She's Independent He's Conventional

HOW DO THEY KEEP IT TOGETHER?

THE VIRTUAL DIVIDE

ARE TECH
GADGETS
KILLING YOUR
RELATIONSHIP?

"I'm not hot on sex anymore"

Experts show one couple
how to bring back that
loving feeling



Real Love Works is back!

Let our quarterly read help you translate **commitment and communication** into everyday life to help you **stay strong and united** in your marriage.

So what makes real love work?

Does it take **working through differences** like the couples in *Opposites Attract*? Or does today's modern technology play a part? Sometimes, there's nothing quite like putting a woman on the pedestal to keep the romance going, so says The Flying Dutchman in *The Art Of Respecting A Woman*.

Enjoy this issue!



ON THE COVER
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Love Made Easy

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SWOP
TEST

Honey, I Can Do It!

Aldrin Ho, 36, and Ng Sim Leng, 35 – married for eight years with two kids – switch domestic chores: He takes on the laundry for a week, and she changes the car tyre.

ALDRIN SAYS

"Doing the laundry sounded like a piece of cake – tedious and mundane, but not difficult. Sorting out the whites from the coloureds, and separating stuff for hand washing from the machine-washable wasn't tough. I'm not totally undomesticated, so I knew to check the washing labels and put aside the dry-clean-only clothing.

But I didn't realise that laundry duties don't end with loading the machine and pressing 'start'. Hanging the clothes out to dry had to be done the 'right' way – by giving them a flick so they would be less creased and easier to iron. Then I had to watch out for afternoon showers and bring in the clothes quickly, which was disruptive to my work.

And the most tedious part: Sorting, folding and putting the clothes away,

which took up to 45 minutes a day! I didn't realise how much laundry we generate. I stopped short of doing the ironing, because that's a different department altogether!

Doing this for a week made me realise how much Sim Leng does for the family. She's a working mum yet she takes care of our two kids, buys the groceries, cooks and does other household chores while supervising the domestic helper – and all without ever complaining.

I know I don't say 'thank you' enough to my wife but I do show that I appreciate her in other ways, such as by buying her favourite mille crepes from Clementi, which is very far from where we live in the east, and driving her to get her bubble tea or peanut soup fix every time she craves them – which is very often!"

I didn't realise that laundry duties **don't end with loading the machine and pressing 'start'.**



SIM LENG SAYS

"I challenged myself to change a tyre as I've never done it before. Aldrin warned that I might find it tough. The one time that he did it, he literally had to jump on the crossbar to loosen the nuts that were tightened with pneumatic tools.

I'm quite petite and I don't have much arm power. After Aldrin and I found the car manual, a jack and tyre tool, I had no problem removing the hub cap, but the nuts were impossible for me and I had to ask him to help me. I also needed him to lift the heavy spare tyre out of the trunk. The rest, I managed on my own by following the manual's and some of my husband's instructions.

I unscrewed the nuts, jacked up the car, which was surprisingly easy, dragged out the

I had **no problem removing the hub cap**, but the nuts were impossible for me.

worn tyre and adjusted the spare into position. Then I lowered the car and screwed the nuts back on. At the end, I was a sweaty, grimy heap. When I actually get a flat, I'm calling the workshop!

But this experiment taught us that marriage is really about sharing responsibilities and taking on roles to complement each other. Also that it is so important to not take each other for granted and to step back and appreciate what the other does once in a while."



What the expert says

Theresa Bung, senior therapist at Family Life Society, shares her tips on how Aldrin and Sim Leng can maintain the happy balance in their roles at home.

ABOUT ALDRIN

It's good that he shows his appreciation and love for Sim Leng. A couple should try to speak each other's love language. So, if Sim Leng's love language is in ensuring that the family's needs are taken care of, Aldrin can speak her language of love with an act or service, such as doing chores.

ABOUT SIM LENG

She seems to be happy as a career woman and carer for her family. However, my advice to her is that she should remember to take time out to relax and pamper herself. This could be as simple as working out in the gym or getting a massage.

Photography Vee Chin Art Direction William Tee & Eddie Lim Styling Martin Wong Hair Celia Tham using Redken/Identity Hairworks Makeup John Lee using Urban Decay Outfits Gap & M/Phosis



red hot!

Wear red to spice things up again in the bedroom. The link between red and sex applies to both men and women, reveals a study conducted by the University of Rochester and the University of Munich. So if you want to make a move on your hubby, buy him red PJs or briefs, and bring the heat back!



LOVE FOOD: **GARLIC**

Think garlic is a mood-killer in the bedroom? Think again. Since ancient times, it has been known to enhance sexual desire and increase stamina. It is also full of the chemical allicin – proven to increase blood flow to the sexual organs. So whip up some garlicky dishes like spaghetti aglio olio or rub roasted garlic on toasted bread. Feed each other and you wouldn't notice the garlic breath!

→ HAVE FUN WITH FOREPLAY

Foreplay isn't only his job any more. Mutual foreplay will increase the excitement and anticipation for both of you, making sex more pleasurable. Be imaginative and creative. Tie up his hands with something soft like a Les Petits Bonbons Silky Sensual Cuffs. Or blindfold him with Bijoux Indiscrets Shhh Blindfold and then touch his erogenous zones with the Les Petits Bonbons Tickle Me Tickler (above). He'll love you for it! Les Petits Bonbons Silky Sensual Cuffs, Bijoux Indiscrets Shhh Blindfold and Les Petits Bonbons Tickle Me Tickler from www.alicemaple.com.



Stay Married & Healthy

Scientific studies compiled in the book *In For Better: The Science of a Good Marriage* by Tara Parker-Pope found that married couples are healthier. **They catch fewer colds, have fewer heart attacks and are less likely to develop cancer or arthritis.** The reasons vary: Women benefit from financial security and marriage intimacy, while men benefit from women's health awareness.

Photos Photolibrary Product Photography Darren Chang

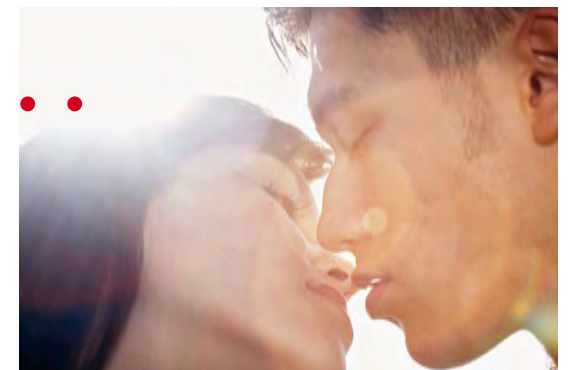
Whether it's doing the dishes or the laundry, **men who help out around the house get more sex**, according to sociologists from the University of California. They added that when their partners feel more valued, it leads to more frequent sex.

Have More Sex

Men, take heed: A 2009 Finnish study found that men who have sex once a week were half as likely to develop erectile dysfunction as men who have sex less frequently. As for women, more sex means enhanced lubrication and elasticity of vaginal tissues, and hence increased enjoyment of sex.

It's in the Kiss...

Make your relationship sizzle again. Put more effort into your smooches, and make each one count. Variety is key, according to the book *The Art Of Kissing* by William Cane. Besides a quick peck on the lips, **try planting kisses on the neck and ears, lip-o-suction and even biting kisses!**



THE BIG

62%

of Singaporeans have sex at least once a week.

36%

achieve an orgasm during sex.

* Durex Sexual Wellbeing Global Survey 07/08

→ **1 in 10**

WOMEN THINK ABOUT SEX EVERY HALF AN HOUR COMPARED TO 3 IN 10 WOMEN WHO THINK ABOUT FOOD, ACCORDING TO A SURVEY BY A UK SLIMMING GROUP.



What's Eating Into Your Savings?

YOU CAN GROW YOUR NEST EGG JUST BY BECOMING SAVVIER ABOUT YOUR INSURANCE, MORTGAGE PAYMENTS, CREDIT CARD AND GROCERY BILLS. HERE'S WHAT TO DO.

Grocery Shopping

If you constantly buy imported meat or branded household products, it all adds up in the long run. Calculate how much you can save a month just by switching brands or supermarkets, then work out your total savings for the year.

TOP TIP Go for no-frills where possible, says Elizabeth Yeo, vice-president and appointed representative with ipac Financial Planning Singapore.

"When it comes to fresh produce, you may find cheaper items at the wet market as opposed to specialty stores or supermarkets," says Elizabeth. Also, find out where your produce is from. For example, 150g of pork spare ribs from Malaysia is \$3, while the same quantity for Australian pork is \$3.95.

Photo: Photolibrary

Personal Treats

Regular spa and hair treatments, a designer bag, expensive shoes and clothes... Work out the total you spend on these indulgences over a year and you'll be stunned. And that's not including treats for the family, like fortnightly movie outings and guilt-buying for the children.

TOP TIP There's nothing wrong with occasionally treating yourself or your family, but do think of putting some of your money towards your savings fund. Trimming \$300 a month from your spending works out to \$3,600 a year. In 10 years, you'd have saved \$36,000 and that's excluding interest!

Insurance

Review your policies with your insurance adviser. You could be forking out too much for your premiums and not getting sufficient coverage, says Esther Seo, associate adviser with ipac Financial Planning Singapore. The same applies if you are buying a product that is not appropriate for your needs in the first place.

When it comes to life insurance, the general rule of thumb is to keep your premium as a single-digit percentage of your income.

TOP TIP A recent Life Insurance Association (LIA) study showed that most Singaporeans have \$48,000 worth of life insurance coverage when they actually need \$500,000. Insurance is meant to meet the family's daily expenses if something were to happen to the breadwinner. And \$48,000 will not go far in serving this purpose.

Besides getting the right amount of coverage, you also need to make sure that you pay the right premiums for the right products, says Esther. It is also important to ensure that you have appropriate hospitalisation coverage that will take care of medical bills; this is separate from your company's health insurance.

Don't be taken in by the minimum-payment option... **outstanding balances can attract an annual interest cost of up to 24 per cent.**

— ELIZABETH YEO, VICE-PRESIDENT AND APPOINTED REPRESENTATIVE WITH IPAC FINANCIAL PLANNING SINGAPORE

Mortgage

A high mortgage loan means you're paying more interest than you need to. If you can make a substantial monthly saving from the interest alone, imagine how much money you can save by the end of the year!

TOP TIP You may want to consider refinancing your home loan, Elizabeth says. Do your research to find out the best interest rates available, talk to finance experts and then decide what kind of loan is best for you.

Generally, most banks in Singapore do not limit the number of times that borrowers can refinance their mortgage. However, if the refinancing is done within the lock-up period imposed by the lending bank, borrowers will be subject to a penalty of commitment fees. If the refinancing is done from Bank A to Bank B, you may also have to pay legal fees to draw up a new agreement with the new lending bank.

Credit Cards

Prioritise your debts. The interest you pay on your credit cards can eat into your savings. Once you've paid off these debts, you'll find you have more to put towards your nest egg.

TOP TIP Pay off the highest-interest debt first, advises Elizabeth. And always pay your credit card bills in full. Don't be taken in by the minimum-payment option on your statement as outstanding balances can attract an annual interest cost of up to 24 per cent.

If you can't pay in full, pay off as much as possible. If you have trouble keeping track of all your credit cards, consider reducing them.

Transport

Minimising taxi and car use could be one simple way to save more.

TOP TIP Start keeping receipts so you can work out how much you're spending every month on peak-hour charges, taxi-booking fees, parking coupons, petrol and so on. See where you can make adjustments – for example, taking the train to town on weekends instead of driving – and see how much money you can save.

Manage your money together

You'll be better off if both you and your spouse actively manage your family's finances, says Elizabeth.

• **Make joint money decisions.** Discuss how you want to split your shared expenses, such as the mortgage, groceries and the children's needs. This way, you are both aware of whether you're on track with your shared goals as a family.

It is also important in case anything happens to one of you. In a time of crisis, the last thing you want to be worrying about is where all your financial statements are. Or worse, how you are going to cope financially.

• **Be honest about money.** There are couples who go for years without knowing how much the other earns, and aren't even aware when the other is promoted or gets a raise. Money does not need to be a sensitive or stressful subject, especially when you're planning to grow it for your family's needs.

Love Test

In his book, *Empowering Couples – Building On Your Strengths*, Professor David Olson identified five aspects of long-term compatibility: communication, personality, ability to resolve conflicts, sex and intimacy, and flexibility. Then, from his interview with over 21,000 couples, he devised a scientifically proven love test which, he claims, gives a 93 per cent accuracy rate on whether there is a “happily ever after” for the couple. See how you measure up on the communication stakes – which is key in any successful relationship – and what needs to be done to increase your compatibility rating.

HOW WELL DO YOU COMMUNICATE?

Spend no more than a few heartbeats on each question and no more than one minute on the quiz.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Your spouse knows what kind of day you've had from the way you shut the front door.
TRUE <input type="checkbox"/> FALSE <input type="checkbox"/> | 6. You haven't discussed a holiday this year.
TRUE <input type="checkbox"/> FALSE <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. When you tell your favourite joke, your spouse tells the punch line (and you laugh).
TRUE <input type="checkbox"/> FALSE <input type="checkbox"/> | 7. You'd talk to your spouse's best friend to find out what was bugging him/her.
TRUE <input type="checkbox"/> FALSE <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Couples in restaurants who don't speak – you're never like that.
TRUE <input type="checkbox"/> FALSE <input type="checkbox"/> | 8. When your spouse apologises, you think it's just to avoid having to talk.
TRUE <input type="checkbox"/> FALSE <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. No one makes you laugh the way your spouse does.
TRUE <input type="checkbox"/> FALSE <input type="checkbox"/> | 9. When you told your spouse your deepest fears, you felt so embarrassed afterwards.
TRUE <input type="checkbox"/> FALSE <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. If you've been given a pay rise, you'll call your spouse first.
TRUE <input type="checkbox"/> FALSE <input type="checkbox"/> | 10. You argue with your spouse just to wind him/her up.
TRUE <input type="checkbox"/> FALSE <input type="checkbox"/> |

How you fare...

Give yourself one point for every 'True' answer to Questions 1 to 5 and one point for every 'False' answer to Questions 6 to 10.

8 OR MORE POINTS

If a good relationship needs communication, you two are set for life. “But make sure there's always some sign of how you feel,” says counsellor Gladeana McMahon, a renowned UK life coach and counsellor. “It's the little things like flowers and cards that count.”

4 TO 7 POINTS

You manage to communicate most of the time, but sometimes you feel as if your spouse is speaking Swahili. “Look at your relationship and see exactly when communication is suffering,” says Gladeana. “Choose a time when you're both receptive and make the most of that moment.”

3 OR FEWER POINTS

It takes two to communicate. “You can learn,” says Gladeana. “One person talks for 15 minutes, the other listens. Swop. It's half an hour out of your day. Invest in this time because you're both worth it.”

Like any major undertaking, a marriage needs a roadmap. So here are four inspiring yet insightful reads.

BUILDING A LOVE THAT LASTS

– The Seven Surprising Secrets of Successful Marriage
Dr. Charles D. Schmitz and Dr. Elizabeth A. Schmitz, Wiley/Jossey-Bass
Call No.: English 306.81 SCH – [FAM]



The authors based their study on success stories instead of failed marriages. From these, they discovered seven pervasive characteristics.

These secrets are surprising because they are deceptively simple, and yet many couples do not practise them at all or often enough. There are plenty of real-life stories that reveal and explain how each of these secrets work. – *Law Loo Shien*

THE MARRIED MAN'S MENTOR

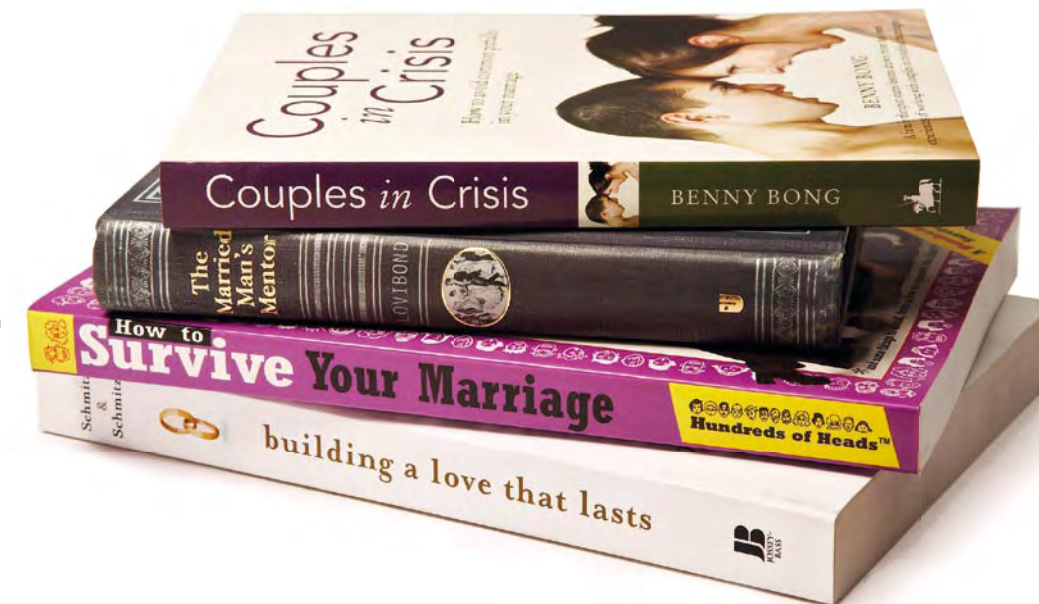
Lucas Lovibond, Andrews McMeel
Call No.: English 306.8722 LOV – [FAM]



Men will appreciate this short and handy read – full of truthful advice, laced with plenty of humour. There are many practical insights that a husband can derive from

this book, like how one should never complain about his wife to his mother!

Interesting topics include Relations (in-laws and relatives), and The Green-eyed Monster (jealousy). Matters such as children (The First Baby – and the Last) and marriage into old age (Darby and Joan) are also dealt with. – *Law Loo Shien*



COUPLES IN CRISIS –

How to Avoid Common Pitfalls in Your Marriage
Benny Bong, Armour
Call No.: English SING 306.81 BON

What causes a marriage to break down? And how can couples remedy and salvage a seemingly hopeless relationship?

Each chapter deals with a specific concept and challenge for a couple which needs to be addressed. Practical advice and tips are seamlessly blended within the chapters, and the reader can find inspirational quotes peppered throughout the book as well. – *Justin Tan*

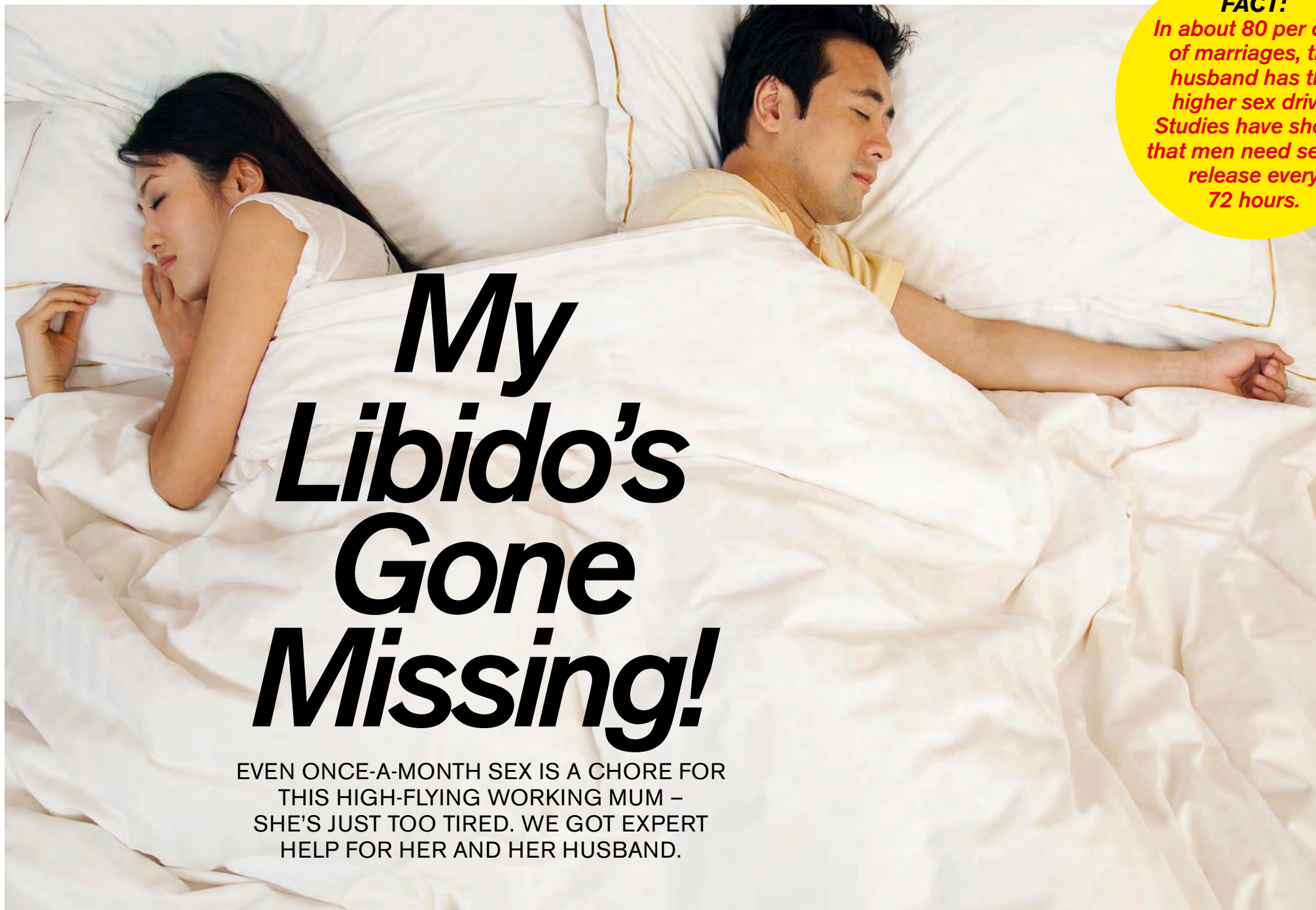


HOW TO SURVIVE YOUR MARRIAGE –

by Hundreds of Happy Couples Who Did and Some Things to Avoid From a Few Ex-spouses Who Didn't
Edited by Yadin Kaufmann and Lori Banov Kaufmann with Jamie Allen, Hundreds of Heads Books
Call No.: English 646.78 HOW – [FAM]

This easy-to-read book is suitable for those who are currently having issues with their married life. Get great tips and advice from many happily married couples on how to remain happy in a marriage. It consists of 12 chapters with information on getting engaged, planning for the wedding, the honeymoon, communicating with one another, managing finances, allocating time for work and play, having fun with the whole family, and handling in-laws. Even topics such as sex and romance are covered. – *Manemegalai*

➡ Reviews are contributed by librarians from the Public Libraries, National Library Board (NLB). These books are available at NLB's Public Libraries. You can check their availability via the NLB's online catalogue at www.pl.sg.



My Libido's Gone Missing!

EVEN ONCE-A-MONTH SEX IS A CHORE FOR THIS HIGH-FLYING WORKING MUM – SHE'S JUST TOO TIRED. WE GOT EXPERT HELP FOR HER AND HER HUSBAND.

FACT:
In about 80 per cent of marriages, the husband has the higher sex drive. Studies have shown that men need sexual release every 72 hours.

MISMATCHED SEX DRIVES

Virtually every couple has different sex drives, say marriage experts and “edu-tainers” Jay and Laura Laffoon. “In roughly 80 per cent of marriages, the husband has the higher sex drive. Studies have shown that the average man needs sexual release every 72 hours,” Jay says.

● **Draw up a timetable for sex**
“What Janice and Pete need to do is to mutually agree on a plan for their sex life. A “plan” does not sound very romantic, but sex is about so much more than just sex. At times, it is the glue that holds marriages together,” Jay explains.

Hormonal changes due to pregnancy and giving birth affect a woman’s libido, but in Janice’s case, 18 months after giving birth, exhaustion is the most likely culprit behind her lack of sexual desire, Laura says. “Janice and Pete need to work together to come up with a plan to address Janice’s exhaustion.”

● **Get your priorities right**
“Marriage is a journey. Along the way, we all have to make adjustments as our life together changes. Janice and Pete need to take a look at their priorities and determine what is and what is not important to them at this point. A good place to start would be to create a family mission statement, which will help them make decisions based on the ‘filter’ of their mission statement,” Laura advises.

Jay elaborates: “For instance, a family’s mission could be to create a

loving, healthy and safe environment where they nurture each other to become global citizens. Come vacation time, a family may decide to spend time helping the needy in Haiti or Calcutta.”

However, remember that family mission statements can change at different times of a family’s life cycle, Jay adds.

● **Put family before career**
Many working mothers may reckon that work-life balance is an urban legend. “It’s attainable, but something has to give!” says Laura. “But it doesn’t have to ‘give’ forever. Pete and Janice should enjoy this season with their daughter; maybe they should both back off their career goals for a while. They ought to realise that if they are really good at what they do, their careers will always be there. Their daughter, however, will only be a child for a short time.”

With all that has been said about sex, the couple should know that the kids can get affected, too. A child’s emotional well-being may suffer if her parents are not emotionally and sexually intimate. Jay says: “There are countless studies indicating the best thing a couple can do to help their children develop into healthy adults is to focus on their marriage. The healthiest, wealthiest and best adjusted adults come from homes where mum and dad are growing in their relationship and connecting in every way.”

Janice*, 32, and Pete*, 35, have been married for four years

and have an 18-month-old daughter, Jasmine*. Both high-achieving PR professionals, they have stressful jobs that involve long hours.

Despite being career-focused, the couple decided to have a child “before it was too late”. Janice went back to work three months after giving birth, as she did not want to put her career on hold for too long, and they left their daughter in the care of Pete’s mum.

“It was very tiring,” she admits. “I was still breastfeeding and had to express every two to three

hours at work, which was very disruptive. I felt fat and tired, but felt that I had to prove to my boss, subordinates and clients that I was still on top of things, that I could be Superwoman and excel at work, even with a baby. It was exhausting and I’ve been exhausted to this day.”

This has taken a toll on the couple’s sex life, as Janice is never in the mood. Pete complains that they have sex only once a month, if he’s lucky. She gets annoyed by his hankering for sex, especially on weeknights, “and I just need to pay my sleep debt on weekends”. When they do have sex, she says, it’s just to get it over and done with. While they do not have big quarrels over this, Pete does get sullen when Janice brushes him off when he initiates sex.

He says that getting a maid to handle the household chores and help with the baby at night, or having his mum stay with them during weekdays would solve the problem. Janice, however, is resistant to the ideas as she feels that their two-bedroom apartment is already too small for their family.

While she feels guilty and selfish for neglecting Pete, she laments: “Honestly, I have zero sex drive. Whether it’s hormonal or just tiredness, I don’t know. Things were okay before I had Jasmine. We worked hard and played hard. Now, my life revolves around work and home. I have almost no time or space for myself.”

* Names have been changed

Photo: Photolibrary



OUR LOVE EXPERTS

Marriage “edu-tainers” Jay and Laura Laffoon are co-founders of Celebrate! from the United States. They tout themselves as “real people with real lives walking through a real marriage” – drawing on their own marriage of over 20 years to convey marital truths. They have written three books and produced countless DVDs on marriage, and will be speaking at the Marriage Convention on March 26 and 27. Visit www.marriagecentral.sg for more information.

REAL LOVE WORKS 2011

Mark your calendar for the annual marriage wellness celebration Real Love Works – from March 25 to April 3 – with Marriage Central.

Marriage Convention 2011 brings together local and international marriage experts to share creative tips to keep a marriage strong. Whether you are married or dating, join us from March 26-27, 2011 at Suntec Convention Centre to gain insights and expert views. Check out "The Ultimate Date", a signature event by Jay and Laura Laffoon. Be prepared to expect nuggets of marriage wisdom with witty liners, non-stop music and laughter peppered throughout the session!

The celebration continues with an inaugural concert featuring a seriously funny comedy on the ups and downs of marriage life specially commissioned by Marriage Central in celebration of Real Love Works. A rib-tickling "live" show of banter, comedic musings and love songs, *Marriage is No Laughing Matter*, is helmed by a stellar cast featuring Selena Tan, Robin Goh, Rani Singam, Sebastian Tan and real-life married couple, Lim Kay Siu and Neo Swee Lin. It promises a night of endless laughter and wise insights into how to stay married to your love of a lifetime!

JAY AND LAURA LAFFOON

Keynote speakers:

Real people with real lives walking through a real marriage – that's how Jay and Laura Laffoon describe themselves. They are marriage "edu-tainers" from Michigan, US, and authors of three books and countless DVDs on the subject of marriage.



MARRIAGE CONVENTION 2011

Saturday, March 26

WOO HIM, WOW HER (ENGLISH)

Can marriage be that simple? In this hilarious and thought-provoking seminar, Jay and Laura Laffoon show couples the importance of keeping the "woo" and "wow" in their relationship.

Time: 9.30am-12pm

Venue: Level 3, Theatre

TEN COMMANDMENTS OF A HAPPY MARRIAGE (MANDARIN)

It is important to reflect on your habits when relating to each other. In this session, you will learn the 10 commandments to cultivate a deeper relationship and reflect on your marriage vows.

Time: 9.30am-12pm

Venue: Meeting Rooms 303-305

Sunday, March 27

"IT'S NOT THAT I DON'T LOVE YOU" – KNOW YOUR PARTNER'S LOVE LANGUAGE (MALAY)

"My husband does not know how to be romantic." "My wife does not appreciate me helping around the house." Not everyone expresses love, care and concern the same way. Learn to read your partner's love language and find out how to communicate better.

Time: 9.30am-12pm

Venue: Meeting Rooms 304-305

THE ULTIMATE DATE (ENGLISH)

This signature event by the Laffoons blends music and comedy into marriage education. A totally interactive and bold way to educate in an entertaining manner, with valuable marriage tools built into the sharing.

Time: 2.30-5pm

Venue: Level 3, Theatre

FLEETING ROMANCE OR ENDURING LOVE? (TAMIL)

As the saying goes: "Desire lasts all of two months, infatuation even less!" When the first flush of romance fades, what endures? Join this humorous seminar to discover aspects of married life to make your marriage strong.

Time: 2.30-5pm

Venue: Meeting Rooms 304-305

GET YOUR TICKETS NOW!

Tickets are available at \$12 per person per session or \$16 per couple per session (includes coffee and tea). Tickets are available from Sistic.

Meet The Speakers

MANDARIN SPEAKERS:
Chan Hon Shek and Lai Fung Ling
Volunteer counsellors and trainers with TOUCH Family Services, both Hon Shek and Fung Ling are certified trainers with Growing Families International. They are happily married with twin daughters.

MALAY SPEAKER:
Mohd Ali Bin Mahmood
The recipient of the President's Outstanding Social Worker Award 2009, Mohd Ali has been a social worker for more than 19 years. He is the Senior Director for PPIS Social Services, Training and Consultancy.

TAMIL SPEAKERS:
V Ravindran and Caroline David
Caroline is a professional counsellor, trainer and family life educator. She has conducted numerous family and parenting workshops. Her husband, V Ravindran, is a corporate trainer and is well received by multinational companies.



MARRIAGE IS NO LAUGHING MATTER

Friday to Sunday, April 1-3

Catch theatre actress Selena Tan and real-life married couple Lim Kay Siu and Neo Swee Lin in *Marriage is No Laughing Matter*, a seriously funny comedy on the ups and downs of marriage. With songs and stand-up comedy segments, this 45-minute show includes musings by Selena on married life, and an original love song composed and performed by Kay Siu for Swee Lin, his wife of more than 15 years.

Date & Time: April 1 (Friday) & April 2 (Saturday), 8pm & 9.30pm, and April 3 (Sunday), 6pm

Venue: DBS Arts Centre

Tickets: Available from Sistic

Visit www.marriagecentral.sg for more details on the line-up of events and activities.



The Virtual Divide

Between SMS, e-mail and Facebook, you and Hubby are barely talking – even when you are together. Stop the tech intrusion into your relationship.

You and your husband are out on a romantic dinner date. But instead of talking, you're both updating your Facebook statuses on your iPhones.

Later that night, after making love, you both reach for your mobile phones or laptops. Forget talking, kissing and cuddling – checking your e-mail has become your new post-sex ritual.

You're supposed to be spending quality time together but, instead, you seem to be more connected to your gadgets than to each other.

This is a common problem with Singaporean couples. Of the 56 women *Real Love Works* polled, about 68 per cent admitted using their Blackberry/iPhone/iPad/laptop when with their spouses.

DIGITAL DISTRACTION

If you don't think gadgets are preventing you and your spouse from spending quality time together, ask yourself this: How many times did you look through your phone the last time you spent precious couple time together?

Jessie and her husband Thomas, both 34, admit to being slaves to their mobile gadgets. Says Jessie, an insurance agent: "Before we became hooked on Facebook, we hardly checked our phones, unless it was to reply to a text message or return a call. Now, we're

both constantly on Facebook. When someone sends us a message or comments on our status, we get instant notifications, so our iPhones never stop beeping."

Meera, 37, an architect, and Raj, 38, a banker, also confess to being lost without their phones, iPads and laptops. "It's hard to break away from them because we use them for everything, from paying bills to communicating with relatives overseas, talking to clients, and keeping up with the news."

"Also, Raj's boss rings him at all hours. I do get upset when we're having an important conversation and Raj has to answer his phone because his boss is calling. He can't possibly ignore his boss' calls, right?" complains Meera.

68 per cent of women in our *Real Love Works* poll admitted **using their Blackberry/iPhone/iPad/laptop** when with their spouse.

MAINTAIN CONNECTION

Maintaining a strong marriage is hard enough as it is. But when you throw in an obsession with gadgets, you're only adding on to the challenge.

"This doesn't mean we have to throw away all our gadgets," says Leo Hee Khian, a counsellor and director at Wonderfully Made, a relationship counselling and sexuality education company. "However, we should be more aware of our vulnerability to the influence of these tech advances and systems."

If you believe that the overuse of gadgets is causing a rift in your relationship, you have to work through it together, suggests Leo. Remember, you are supposed to be there for each other and to build your relationship together. Be supportive if he is the one with the problem, and if you're the one who needs support, don't be afraid to ask for it.

Lay down the rules, and still enjoy your gadgets

- **Come to a compromise.** You could agree to some rules, like no e-mails after 8pm, no Internet on Saturdays and no checking the phone during meals.
- **Set a time limit.** If you really have to use your gadgets when you're supposed to be spending quality time with your spouse, agree to spend no more than five minutes on them.
- **Have gadget-free outings.** Plan a date with your spouse without the tech distractions, says Leo. You have to make the effort to break this dependence on your gadgets, so leave your phones at home. Sooner or later, you will get used to it.
- **No work calls after work.** You wouldn't be checking your e-mail or voicemail or sending SMSes if your clients, colleagues and supervisors didn't contact you in the first place, so tell them not to call or e-mail you after work unless it's really urgent.
- **Make your gadgets inaccessible.** Do activities that make it difficult or impossible for you use your phones. For example, go for a run or swim together.

One Couple's Solution: Gadget-free Days

Clarice Wong, 31, a fitness instructor, says gadgets were almost like a third party in her marriage – but not anymore.

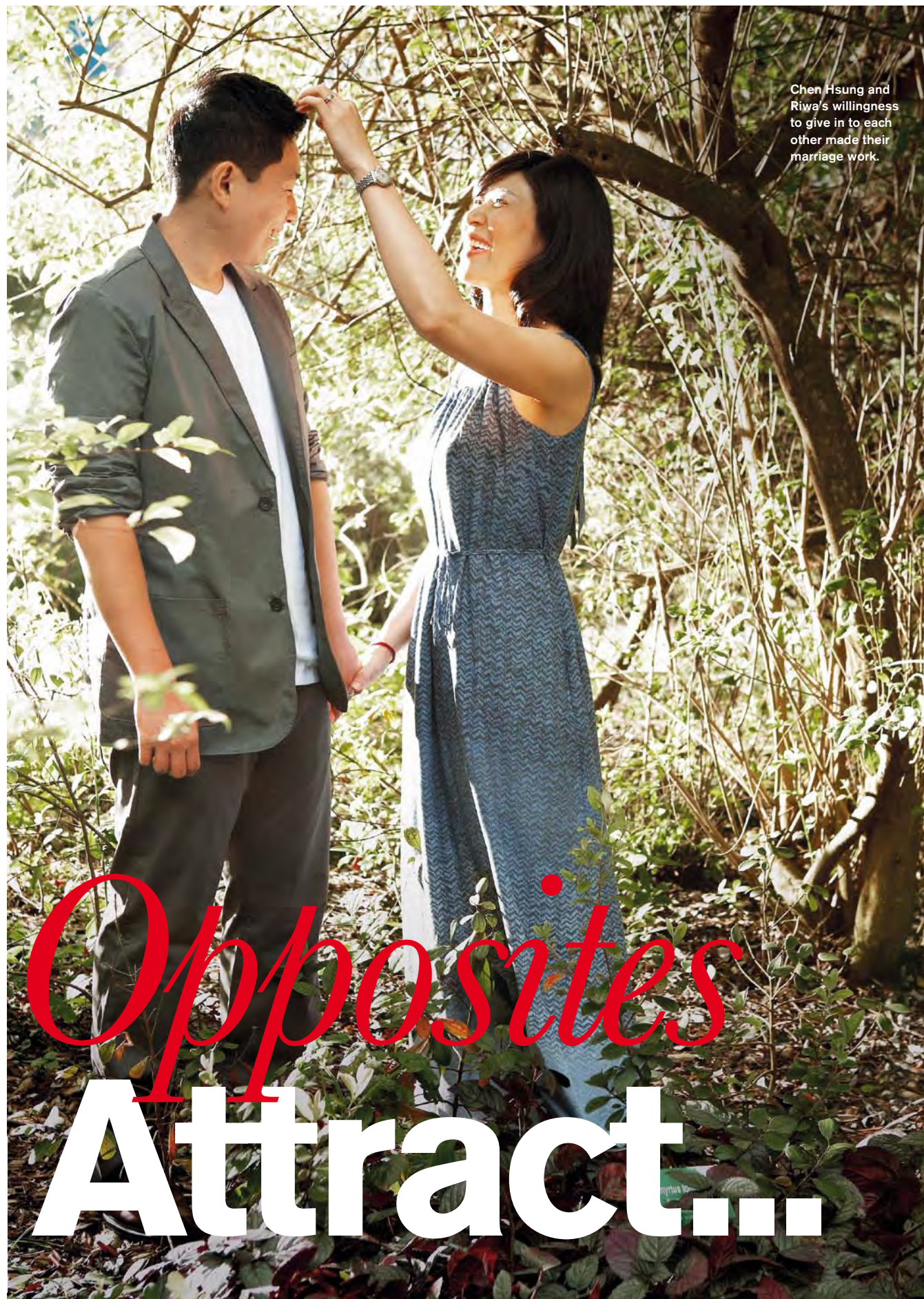
"Once, we went on a weekend retreat where gadgets were not allowed. We didn't even have a TV in our room. It felt weird not using our laptops and phones for two days, but it was also liberating. We stayed up all night talking and cuddling without any interruptions. And, for the first time in our three-year marriage, we felt super close.

When we got home, we decided to have a gadget-free day every fortnight. So every other Sunday, when I don't have to work, we switch off our phones from 9am to 9pm and stay away from our laptops and iPads. We don't switch on our TV either. Instead, we spend time cooking, talking, and making plans for the future.

It's been six months, and we believe our marriage is stronger because of it."



Photo: Photolibrary



Chen Hsung and Riwa's willingness to give in to each other made their marriage work.

Photography Vee Chin Styling Martin Wong Hair Celia Tham, using Redken Makeup John Lee, using Urban Decay Outfits Gap & M/phosis Location HortPark and the Southern Ridges

Opposites Attract...

... or so the saying goes. What happens when different interests and cultural backgrounds collide with matters of the heart? Find out how these couples work around their differences to stay happy – and happily married.

COUPLE ONE

She's independent, he's conventional

They've made it work for: 10 years

Riwa Akiyama, 30s,
ORGANISATION CONSULTANT

Well-travelled and educated, Riwa values her independence when it comes to making important decisions on finances, where to live and even when to visit her family. Marriage certainly changed all that. The biggest has to be her move to Singapore six years ago.

"My husband's work then was based out of Singapore and he really enjoyed it. But I had a job offer in New York and it was difficult for me to give it up," she says.

"Still, it was clear we wanted to stay together and I wanted my husband to pursue work that he truly enjoyed. He has always supported me to do the same too."

"It seemed like a sacrifice at that time to give up my independent ways," she adds. "But I gained something I couldn't have earned by myself – a trusting and loving relationship, and a deep sense of belonging and acceptance."

Nationalities aside, the mother of an 18-month-old girl admits that she and her husband are completely different individuals. "He would place his family first, while I devote more time and energy to my close friends," she says.

Khoo Chen Hsung, 30s,
EQUITIES ANALYST

Chen Hsung thinks they are still learning to appreciate each other's cultural backgrounds without letting it get in the way of supporting their choices. "Marriage is and will always be an ongoing learning process," he says.

"Our challenges in the early days of marriage arose from the different expectations of the roles we play in the family. I had conventional expectations of what a wife should be. Ironically, they clashed with her sense of independence, which was the very quality I admired when we were dating!"

What works for the couple is their willingness to give in to each other. "Before getting married, we had planned to pursue our graduate degrees in America," relates Chen Hsung. "After the wedding, I didn't want her to be studying in a different city from me."

To shorten the time the couple spent apart, Riwa delayed pursuing her degree till Chen Hsung was done with his MBA. Then, she compressed her two-year programme into a year. "We stayed apart for that year till she completed her degree," says Chen Hsung. "We were so glad when we reunited in the same city again."

I had conventional expectations of **what a wife should be**. Ironically, they clashed with her sense of independence... the very quality I admired when we were dating!

– KHOO CHEN HSUNG, 30s,
EQUITIES ANALYST

COUPLE THREE

He's Malay, she's Chinese

They've made it work for: 4 years

Ridwan Dollah, 40, CONSULTANT

Boy meets girl. They fall in love and get married. Predictable, right? Except that the boy is a Malay Muslim and the girl is Chinese. In fact, Ridwan wasn't sure if it would work out at first.

"My family is strict, traditional and religious, so I was not sure if they would accept a non-Muslim," he says. "When we went out on dates, I was paranoid about bumping into our relatives." As it turned out, both parties' parents gave their blessings.

These days, Ridwan's challenges are of a different kind: mastering Hokkien and using the chopsticks. "I'm adaptable and I learn fast. Besides, most of her relatives speak English, so I'm off the hook!" says the father-to-be, who is expecting his first child in May.

"We want to expose our child to both cultures," he says. "She'll be able to celebrate two festivals, wear different outfits and enjoy different cuisines. I'm looking forward to her collecting red packets, so I can recoup some of my losses!" he laughs.

Jessica Ang, 37, ART DIRECTOR

When they were dating, Jessica told herself to just go with the flow and be happy. Eight years into their relationship, things started to get serious. "We had to face the big issues such as marriage, conversion and seeking approval from our parents," she recalls.

Today, language is Jessica's biggest hurdle. Despite taking a Malay language course before the wedding, she admits she still can't string a sentence together. Unfazed by the language barrier, Jessica has endeared herself to Ridwan's large family and Muslim traditions. "Compared to Chinese New Year, Hari Raya Puasa is a big affair," she says. "We typically visit at least 10 households in half a day!"

Initially, Jessica wasn't used to the salam or the Muslim handshake, which

involves clasping your elders' hands in yours. "I don't hug my parents but now, I am expected to come into close contact with many people," she says.

Jessica also had to make some wardrobe adjustments. "I make sure I dress modestly when I am with Ridwan's family. I see it as a form of respect to them and to him too."

**I make
sure I dress
modestly** when

I am with Ridwan's family. I see it as a form of respect to them and to him too.

**– JESSICA ANG, 37,
ART DIRECTOR**



Couple time

Three fab ways to unwind, indulge and connect.



INDULGE

BLISS AT AURIGA SPA

Ultra-luxe Auriga Spa offers unique wellness treatments based on the cycles of the moon. Each of its nine treatment suites has a lush private garden.

A SECOND HONEYMOON

For a full day of pampering, indulge in Auriga's new Honey Moon treatment package for two (\$1,176). Start with 60 minutes of relaxation by the outdoor pool, in the gym or use any of the spa's facilities.

SENSUAL TREATS

Next is the three-hour Signature Moon spa treatment, where you're buffed with rose-infused sea salts and petals, then treated to a hair and scalp treatment, full-body massage and jasmine facial mask. Luxuriate in a *mandi safar* bath and savour tea in your garden.

THE RELAXATION CONTINUES

Request for a massage lesson for couples so you can continue the mutual pampering at home. Finish with mocktails at Bob's Bar.

Auriga Spa: Capella Singapore, 1 The Knolls, Sentosa Island, tel: 6591-5023



CONNECT

BEND AND BOND AT UPDOG STUDIO

Work out while working on your relationship with Couple Yoga, Updog Studio's special 90-minute class that combines partner yoga and Thai massage.

ROMANTIC INVOLVEMENT

Suitable even for beginners, this involves postures and flow sequences that you'll need to rely on each other to execute. Deepen your connection in the process as you strengthen your communication, and build mutual trust and understanding. Private sessions at \$165 per couple are available upon request. Receive 10 per cent off when you sign up for a 10-session course.

Updog Studio: 902 East Coast Parkway, Block B, #02-05A Playground @ Big Splash, tel: 6440-0282



WINE & DINE

FETE OF LOVE AT IL LIDO

If French is the language of love, then Italian cuisine is the food of passion. The verdant surrounds of the Sentosa Golf Club set the stage for a marvellous evening at this modern Italian restaurant. Arrive early for appetisers on the deck as the sun dips into the sparkling South China Sea.

MOMENTS TO SAVOUR

Flavourful pasta, fresh seafood and fine meat dishes on the menu and world-class wines hold promise of a delightfully satisfying dinner date. Or, opt for the family set menu (\$103.50 nett per person), which includes nine appetisers and main courses, plus three signature desserts – tiramisu, panna cotta and molten lava chocolate cake – for a sweet ending to your meal.

Il Lido: Sentosa Golf Club, 27 Bukit Manis Road, tel: 6866-1977

Photography Frenchescar Lim Location At-Sunrice GlobalChef Academy



Chocolate Lava Cake With Vanilla Ice Cream

Makes 6 cakes

INGREDIENTS

85g Valrhona Alpaco chocolate
90g butter
85g sugar
40g cake flour (a flour with less gluten)
2 tsp cocoa powder
½ tsp baking powder
¼ tsp salt
3 eggs

METHOD

1. Melt the chocolate and butter together.
2. Add the sugar, cake flour, cocoa powder, baking powder and salt in a bowl, and mix evenly.
3. Mix the eggs and chocolate butter mixture evenly using a whisk.
4. Fold all the dry ingredients into the egg mixture using a spatula, stop when it's just mixed; do not overmix.
5. Pour into mould and bake at 180°C for 9 to 10min.
6. Serve with a scoop of vanilla ice cream and strawberries.



Lin Weixian is a Chef at Bonheur Patisserie (www.bonheuropatisserie.com.sg). He met his wife Carline Jahja Saputra when they were classmates at the At-Sunrice GlobalChef Academy. They recently married and set up Bonheur Patisserie, a little pastry cafe at 70 Duxton Road.

Sinful Pleasure

GET YOUR OTHER HALF INTO THE KITCHEN AND BAKE THIS DELICIOUS CHOCOLATE PERFECTION TOGETHER.

Get Closer

Whether it's a bear hug or a passionate cuddle, take the cue from these five winning couples from last issue's "Our Best Hug" contest.



"Age will not be an issue. Weight is definitely not a problem! Hubby, I promise to 'carry' you for the rest of my life!"
– June Lee Yin Yin
& Gabriel Goh Guan Hock



"Here's a hug and a kiss for baby Gloria and you!"
– Julie Ong & Teng Teck Hou



"I will never leave you behind. You are the rhythm of my heart."
– Nor Ashraf Bin Samsudin
& Marinah Bte Mydin



"It has been 10 years of love since we graduated together."
– Jessica Loh & Yeo Joo Yong



"I lean onto him for support and strength."
– Nathira Bte Salim & Mohammad Jarjees
Thameem Ansari

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL WINNERS!
You have won an exclusive 4" x 8" Instant Calendar worth \$22.90. Winners will be notified via e-mail.

Our Best Quote Contest

We can all gain from one another's experiences. Share your thoughts on "How We Make Up After A Fight" and win a prize. Your quote should not be more than 30 words. The best three entries will each win a degustation set menu voucher for two worth \$351.88 from Il Lido.

E-mail your entry by May 5, 2011 to reallove@marriagecentral.sg. It must be

accompanied by a high-resolution image of at least 300dpi of you and your spouse, your full names, ages, IC numbers, home address and contact numbers.

Winners will be notified via e-mail and the winning entries will be published in the July-September 2011 issue of *Real Love Works* and on the Marriage Central website.

"We don't wait for the other to say 'I'm sorry' first. Whoever cools down earlier will approach the other and apologise." – JOANNA TAN

"My husband will touch my hand and draw me close to him. That gesture alone melts the anger away." – NG AI MEI

TERMS AND CONDITIONS: 1. The publisher reserves the right to cancel, terminate, modify or suspend the contest and these terms and conditions, make prize substitutions for any reason, at any time and without any liability. 2. By participating in this contest, participants agree to be bound by these rules and warrant that the submitted story is written. 3. The publisher reserves the right to edit entries for clarity. 4. All decisions are final and binding, and no correspondences will be entertained. 5. Winners are responsible for collecting their own prizes. The date(s), time(s) and venue(s) of the collection will be notified via e-mail. 6. The prizes are not exchangeable or redeemable for cash. 7. The publisher is not responsible for lost or misdirected entries.

Win!

Three Degustation Set Menu vouchers* for two worth \$351.88 from Il Lido.

*Reservations are required. Winners need to quote "Real Love Works 2011".

Vouchers are valid for three months from the date of issue.



The Art of Respecting a Woman

The Flying Dutchman has a message for your husband – it's never old-fashioned to put a woman on a pedestal. And it's not too late to start.

When it comes to women, I know only one way to treat them – with respect. Not only the woman I love, but all women.

In many instances, women tend to be relegated to the background in our lives. But I disagree with this.

SPOIL HER

I can't say why many men seem to feel that once love is confirmed, romance takes a back seat. I am not sure whether it is our upbringing, or we are too busy chasing the almighty dollar. Either way, it's no excuse.

Call me old-fashioned but women are meant to be spoiled, fussed over, put on a pedestal and adored. Do you dress up for your woman? Do you hold her hand for no reason? Do you do the small things like open a car door, give a morning kiss, buy a rose for no reason, or most important of all, leave a love note on the pillow? Making a woman feel good can be extremely enjoyable for the man as well.

You just have to remember that to women, the little things are incredibly important. The dinners are nice, the jewellery is nice, the home is nice but it's the rose that will be remembered, it's the love note that will be treasured and it's the morning kiss that will make the best start to the day.

Having said all this, not all women are the same. Some don't like to be fussed over because they need room to breathe.



LOVE & RESPECT

So it is vital to take time to discover who your woman is. If you don't know her, you can't truly love her. More importantly, you can't respect her. And every woman wants to be respected by the man she loves.

Respect is not only about how you treat her but also how you support her, encourage her and even take responsibility for some things so she has time for herself. In fact, showing effort is the greatest form of respect.

Do you have it in you to respect a woman? Can you let her go to become her own person or will she only ever be your partner? Can you let her shine on her own? And if so, how far will you go to help her shine?

Can you listen to her without trying to solve her problems? (She can solve them on her own, so don't try unless asked.) Can you open up to her about your work, life, friends... anything that is important to you? In short, she is more than your partner; she should be your confidante and you, hers.

It isn't difficult. You just need to put all the personal egos aside. If you are like me, you will believe that love does conquer all. You picked your partner so support her, encourage her, love her and most importantly respect her because without her, life would be very lonely indeed.

Call me old-fashioned but **women are meant to be spoiled, fussed over, put on a pedestal and adored.**

72% of husbands remember anniversaries.

100% of their wives couldn't be happier.



Real Love Celebrates.

From anniversaries to loving gestures, spouses know it's the little things that make a big difference.

For programmes and creative tips to keep love strong, visit MarriageCentral.sg today.

Sources: Singapore Love Poll 2011

When it comes to love,



do you speak
the same language?

Find out more at MarriageCentral.
Now at Jurong and Woodlands Regional Library.

Real love goes beyond sweet words. It is romance married with patience, compassion, trust and life-long commitment. MarriageCentral is your one stop resource for ways to keep your marriage strong. From creative ideas and useful advice on everything from marriage preparation to keeping your love evergreen.

www.MarriageCentral.sg

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CENTRAL**
REAL LOVE WORKS